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SUBJECT: Darfur - Press Coverage and Health in Zam Zam

Summary and Comment

¶1. Recent media attention on gaps in the provision of health services in Zam Zam internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in North Darfur prompted USAID's Darfur Field Office (DFO) to verify the reports. Zam Zam camp had been adequately served by three non-governmental organizations (NGOs) providing health services until mid-May 2006 when one NGO left the area. Contrary to press reports, however, health services in Zam Zam continue, and no outbreaks or major health problems have emerged. In addition, the State Ministry of Health (SMOH) and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) are working in coordination with health providers in North Darfur toward devising a long-term solution to address the needs of Zam Zam's population. At this time, the DFO recommends supporting one international NGO to guide and build capacity within the two existing national NGOs present in Zam Zam. End summary and comment.

Building National NGO Capacity

¶2. In general, the provision of health services in North Darfur is hampered by insecurity, decaying or non-existent facilities, a lack of supplies and reliable cold chain, an insufficient number of qualified national staff wanting to serve in Darfur, and a high staff turnover rate.

¶3. Zam Zam IDP camp, located 16 kilometers south of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, is a mixed community of approximately 32,000 IDPs and host community residents. The Spanish Red Cross (SpRC) serves as camp coordinator, and several UN agencies and NGOs provide basic services. The camp is well organized, and despite continuing insecurity, NGOs implement a variety of programs ranging from health and water and sanitation projects to livelihood activities and distribution of relief supplies.

¶4. Until May 2006, Medecins sans Frontieres-Spain (MSF-Sp) operated a primary health care clinic in Zam Zam camp. When a survey concluded that conditions in the

camp no longer met emergency criteria, MSF-Sp moved operations south to an underserved area. Prior to its departure, MSF-Sp liaised with the WHO and SMOH to ensure the continuation of basic medical services at Zam Zam.

15. Currently, two clinics run by national NGOs are operational in Zam Zam camp. The Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) clinic in Zam Zam can see and treat 250 to 300 patients per day. The Sudanese Development Organization (SUDO) clinic can see between 200 and 250 patients per day. According to the June 14 SMOH weekly morbidity and mortality statistical report, 1,162 patients in Zam Zam camp were treated during the previous week. These figures illustrate that the SRCS and SUDO clinics are operating under maximum daily capacity.

16. On June 7, WHO reported that the health situation in Zam Zam camp is stable. In addition, SRCS is providing vaccination services in the camp, and SUDO is expanding its staff presence in Zam Zam by one medical doctor to be supported by Medecins du Monde-Greece (MDM-G). Likewise, efforts are ongoing to build capacity of SRCS and SUDO to provide nutrition services in Zam Zam, such as the three-day workshop on supplementary feeding and nutritional surveillance conducted by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and SMOH in late May.

Using the Press to Raise Funds

17. SCRS assumed operations in Zam Zam from the Saudi Red Crescent (SRC) in December 2005. SRC provided physical assets and three months of funding to SRCS. SCRS managed to secure additional funding to continue until June 30,

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the date reported in recent press coverage. The SRCS Health Coordinator stated that the organization contacted the media in an attempt to raise funds for the clinic. SRCS also noted that the organization will stay in Zam Zam beyond June 30, but does need to secure long-term funding. While one article focused on the absence of an ambulance in Zam Zam, SRCS reported that making an ambulance available would be in vain due to insecurity and the threat of hijacking.

Recommendation

18. Additional donor support to an international NGO to further build capacity of SRCS and SUDO would help to ensure the continued stability of the health situation in Zam Zam. MDM-G is supporting SRCS with personnel and has already diverted one mobile clinic to Zam Zam. MDM-G is also providing transportation for critical patients to El Fasher Hospital. In addition, USAID partner Relief International has expressed interest in expanding into Zam Zam. The DFO will continue to monitor the situation and liaise with these organizations regarding next steps.

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